

**Congress of the United States**  
**House of Representatives**  
Washington, DC 20515

April 8, 2020

The Honorable Alex Azar  
Secretary  
Department of Health and Human Services  
200 Independence Avenue, S.W.  
Washington, DC 20201

Dear Secretary Azar:

Congress recently passed the Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security Act in response to the COVID-19 outbreak. This legislation included \$100 billion for health care providers to ensure that they are equipped to combat this virus. The threat is most prevalent with the elderly, particularly those in long term care facilities. I stand ready to partner with your agency to ensure the most frail and vulnerable in our country are not put at further risk.

We have already seen that the Virginians in long term care today are some of the most threatened by the coronavirus. Virginia's nursing facilities care for over 91,000 residents and patients annually through the selfless efforts of nearly 50,000 dedicated caregiving staff. In Virginia the average age of a long-stay nursing facility resident is 79 years; many have multiple comorbidities that leave them especially vulnerable to the virus and subsequent complications. Half of Virginia's assisted living residents are over the age of 85. The price of inaction is alarming.

COVID-19 is currently impacting hundreds of skilled nursing facilities and assisted living centers across the US and continues to spread rapidly across the country. Estimates project as many as 87,000 potential deaths in these communities if drastic action isn't taken immediately. As a result, long term care providers are facing immediate and dire circumstances. They are making it a priority to provide safety and protection for their residents, patients, and healthcare workers by doing everything possible to work with your agency to eliminate infections within their facilities and to flatten the curve of this pandemic. **The greatest and most immediate crisis they face is the lack of health care workers and an increased need for essential supplies.**

To support providers as they battle the spread of coronavirus, I ask that your agency **dedicate a minimum of \$15 billion from the relief fund to skilled nursing facilities and at least \$10 billion to the assisted living facilities** and that these distributions be made on a monthly basis. Disbursements from the COVID-19 Relief Fund should be dedicated to all skilled nursing facilities and assisted living facilities across the country: to those facilities that have confirmed COVID-19 cases in an effort to help contain the outbreak, as well as funds to prevent an outbreak in non-COVID-19 impacted facilities. In facilities that do not have confirmed COVID-19 cases, additional staffing and supplies can help ensure that residents and staff are able to keep the virus out of their buildings.

Skilled nursing facilities and assisted living communities have already made unprecedented investments in response to this crisis. The vast majority of these expenses are directly tied to additional staffing and

supplies to protect their staff and vulnerable patients from exposure to the virus and to contain the virus if it is introduced into a building

The staff and residents in skilled nursing facilities and assisted living communities around the country desperately need your immediate and ongoing support. Ensuring that this funding is delivered to these providers promptly is critical to their primary role in flattening the curve of this virus and protecting our nation's seniors and most vulnerable. I look forward to continuing to work with you to keep these residents safe from COVID-19.

Sincerely,



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Abigail D. Spanberger  
Member of Congress



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Denver Riggleman  
Member of Congress



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Jennifer Wexton  
Member of Congress



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H. Morgan Griffith  
Member of Congress